

HUNTING REMINISCENCES

By an ex M.F.H.



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The Aschur
on
"Slack Grey"

*I dedicate these reminiscences
to the greatest friend of
hunting and hunter breeding,*

MY BROTHER.

HUNTING REMINISCENCES

By an ex M.F.H.

probably H.A. TIAIRKS

Master of the

WESTON HARRIERS

and the MENDIP

which is now by

MENDIP FARMERS

A fellow who has been a very great help in taking down my notes in shorthand and typing for me is Mr. Long of Callow Rock Lime Co. and I may say that if it had not been for him and my secretary Mr. Dring I should not have got very far.

SOME of my friends may wonder at my audacity in attempting this account of my hunting life for the past fifty years. My excuse is that my nephews and nieces, many of whom I taught to ride and hunt, as well as many of the younger generation of followers of my Hunt, have asked me to do it. I welcomed this request all the more as I realised that it would give me an opportunity of putting on record what a marvellous fellow my brother Frank has always been to me, and I have done my best to show how we have lived our lives in sport together.

My earliest experience of riding ended disastrously for me, for at the age of 6 I had my first riding "lesson" which consisted of my pony being led to the end of a small field and then allowed to gallop back with me. Falling off I broke my left arm very badly, and had not my Mother insisted on it being left on and stiff, I should have been minus one. I have never moved it at the elbow since. The pain I had at that time contracted my feet and so throughout my life I have been crippled in one arm and both feet.

Frank and I spent our very early years hunting on ponies with the West Kent Foxhounds, and amongst our many amusing experiences was the night when we were far from home and stayed the night (a Saturday night) at Farningham, riding home in the morning as our parents were going to Church. Unkind people said we timed it so as not to go to Church. Perhaps they were right, I expect they were. I remember drinking cherry brandy that morning and being very ill on the way home.

Our ponies had to work in the roller and laundry cart on off days and so were kept very fit. Mine had no withers at all and many a time I remember kind-hearted old people helping me to put the saddle back from the pony's ears into the right place; I suppose no one thought of cruppers on saddles then. I have

always found that anyone will help a small boy or girl and I have always tried to do the same for them myself. They are the rising generation of foxhunters and as such should be encouraged.

Frank and I hunted together off and on to the ages of 11 and 13. Then he went into the Navy and I went to Marlborough College and we did not see much of each other till he left the service in 1894 to go into business and I went to Christ Church, Oxford. We had many good days hunting together then and in 1900 I went to live at Webbington to farm and we then hunted with the Weston Harriers.

I left Marlborough and went to a tutor at Thornbury in Gloucestershire to pass into Oxford. This tutor was a parson with a weak inside and he also had a pepper pot that he used by screwing the top round. I filled this one day with Beechams Pills and the result was that I got several days hunting while he was recovering from the effects.

I may also mention here a story against myself. I am rather tall, standing 6ft. 6ins. in my socks. I went one day to a neighbouring church, and when I stood up, I found the parson waving his hand at me. I thought it terribly friendly of him and waved back. I found out later that he thought I was standing on the seat. One of the fellows tutoring with me at Thornbury was able to inhale cigarette smoke and keep it for some time. As we pupils were made to sit with the choir, he demoralised the lot (and they were a mixed lot) by inhaling on the church door-step and puffing it out during the first prayer. Our poor parson suffered a good deal from us, but he was a real good fellow and forgave all of it.

While at Thornbury I had a marvellous hunter called "Banbury" and on him I got my taste for jumping gates. He belonged to my brother Harry, who was in the 5th Dragoon Guards and went to India, where he died in 1893 of enteric fever. Harry

was always my model of what a man should be. He was a perfect horseman and for some years he had a pack of mixed Harriers and Beagles; he used to take them to Loxton in his leave and hunt anything. One night we arrived at Loxton with Hounds and horses, and as we could not find stabling for them all, we decided to put one of them, "Mouse," in the Hall at Loxton Lodge. It made an excellent loose box with a sofa across the opening into the house, and I well remember this mare neighing in the night—we took her water in an article not generally used for drinking purposes.

There is an enclosed lawn in front of Loxton Lodge and Harry used to use this as a grass run. After lunch he would open the window and the Hounds used to come in and finish what we left. We used to hunt a tame stag at times. One Sunday morning we let it out "by mistake" and then got horses and Hounds out and had to hunt it to retake it. We passed through many a village while people were either going to Church or coming out. My uncle was Rector of Loxton then and I fear he had not a very high opinion of any of us, though we never did anything except to make a bit of hunting history. When Harry died our father gave the pack to Mr. Hardwick of Newtons, Kewstoke, and this same pack we took on again in 1907 for seven seasons. Frank and I were joint Masters and I hunted them. I may say here that Frank paid all expenses as he has done ever since, up to May 1931. He is, and always has been, the best brother a fellow could ever have.

When Harry brought his Hounds to Loxton he could not have hunted the Country unless he had made friends with Harry Isgar of White House and his Father. These two were I know his greatest help and Harry Isgar was a great fellow to Hounds and could sing a good song too. I always remember his song "Gallant Stone Wall Jackson" and I say Gallant Harry Isgar.

Frank always went marvellously to Hounds, and does still. I think this is the time to relate a story concerning us both. I was always noted for my extremely bad language in the hunting field; later in life I practised it on a policeman and got fined £1, but I shall say more about that later. My second whipper-in, G. Stone, gave notice because I cursed him rather extra much. My first whipper-in, W. Holley, who is with me now, was talking to Frank about it and made the following remark, "Mr. Herman curses you Sir, and me Sir, so why shouldn't he curse Stone?" and I am afraid Holley was right.

My four years up (and down) at the House were amongst the best years of my life. When I first went up I remember my father paid £150 in my account at the old bank. Thus I thought very generous of him, but when I told him that I had spent the £150 and a bit more at the beginning of the second term, he told me he had expected it to last a year.

I had a letter the other day from Lionel Darell, who was at the House with me; he heard that I was trying to write my reminiscences, and he asked me to record some of the things he said I had done at Oxford. The particular thing he wished me to record was that I rode on a horse round Peckwater Quad, followed by a dog. I got gated for a week for this, and was lucky not to be sent down. It had the opposite effect on me to that which I expect the Dean wanted in that there was nothing to do except eat, drink, and sleep; though I worked hard and rather enjoyed the novel experience. My room was on the ground floor in Peck, and I had my dog put through the window looking on Bear Lane, so I had some company, and all my life I believe I have preferred dogs, horses, and Hounds to humans. They are more faithful, and they do not lie to you.

In 1896 the late King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, came down to open the new Town Hall at Oxford. The Oxford police understood undergraduates thoroughly, and if there was a rag on they took no notice; but unfortunately they brought down London Mounted Police, and we undergraduates unhorsed every one of them, and found ourselves locked up for the night. We were bailed out by the Dons, but one very famous man, who is now dead, said as he walked into his cell "I now declare this cell open."

I used to hunt fairly regularly with the Bicester when Lord Cottenham was Master, also with the Heythrop and Old Berkshire, and I remember how Lord North used to be kind to all undergraduates hunting with the Heythrop, while Lord Cottenham was quite the reverse.

I also played polo in the summer on Port Meadow and though I played in several matches, I was not good enough for the Inter-Varsity matches. The three Nickalls, Harold Ward and Lord Villiers were the great Varsity players then, and Pat Nickalls I know is still playing. I was a Member of the St. Aldates Club, commonly known as the "Rousers"—I fear some of us lived up to the name. I took my degree in 1898 and then decided to go farming, knowing that that meant hunting. I was a pupil at Lockinge with Col. Carter but finding I was too far from the Old Berkshire Vale, I moved on to Buscot under Mr. Crossland, and I well remember being told that one of the ways to learn farming was to hunt and see how other people farmed. Later on when I was hunting Hounds I always noticed that there was a better scent on the best farmed land.

Lord Faringdon (he was Mr. Henderson then and the owner of the Buscot Estate) was always very kind to me, as were all his family—his son Frank and I were at Oxford together. Eddie Dunn was Master of the Old Berkshire then. He mounted his hunt

servants on short-tailed hog maned horses (all bays) and they were very well turned out. I learnt a lot of hunting lore in those days, especially the way to get over, and not into, the Denchworth and Rosey Brooks. In those days all gaps in hedges were mended with timber and there was no wire. Twenty minutes over the Vale was a joy and a dream and it took some doing. I had a very good pal at Shrivenham, Hudson by name, and I used to ride over to him to dinner. One night on going to get my mare I could not find her, so they lent me another, as I thought. The next morning on going into my stables I found she was my mare all right, but Hudson had hogged her mane. I suppose I had done myself pretty well and was glad to get home on anything.

It was there that I met Tommy Fisher, one of the best sportsmen in the land and a terror to Hounds. He was never happy unless he had several crashes a day and many a time he has come home with only the brim of his top hat remaining. He was always nearly stony broke but he generally got in six days a week. On Sundays he would amuse himself by jumping the rails round the Shire Stallion Paddock at Buscot. Such was Tommy Fisher in those days, and right up to 1914. He was always in front with Hounds, with always that cheery smile which I expect has carried him through many troubles. I think the year that Craganour got disqualified for bumping, after winning the Derby, and the Stewards wrongly gave the race to Aboyeur, probably did more to make hunting difficult for him than any loss of nerve. Anyhow he is, and always has been, one of the best pals I ever had, and though I have not seen much of him lately, I am still hoping he will roll up one day in his one-horse chaise, if he still has it. All women adored him, but he was proof against the lot. I bought my good horse "Gaza" from Tommy Fisher.

I left Buscot in 1900 to go to Webbington in Somerset, to a farm that my father owned, and there I have stayed for thirty-six years and hope to do so for a few more. I hunted with the



MR. TIARKS' HARRIERS

Weston Harriers and Wells Harriers, and had occasional days with the Beaufort and Berkeley and Taunton Vale Fox Hounds. Mr. Hardwick was Master of the Weston Harriers and we had great fun over that enormous water country. I must say that any horse that would jump those rhines, or arms of the sea as I once heard them called, would jump any country.

Frank and I took our best water jumpers to the Warwickshire once to stay with Pat Nickalls, and we jumped the Watergall Brook each way without thinking we had done very much. There is a river in the Weston Harrier country, called the Crooked River, measuring 19 feet from bank to bank, and we used to take this on in cold blood to amuse our horses. In these days it would be called schooling; but I have seldom met anyone who knew how to school a horse over jumps. I cannot, and I always think the horse does most of the schooling for the rider, at least if that rider is a young fellow just down from the Varsity, full of himself, and whose ignorance of the first essentials of horsemanship is painfully apparent.

In 1907 Frank and I took on the Mastership of the Weston Harriers and called them Mr. Tiarks', and we hunted them four days a week without a subscription. I was Huntsman. We had Sid Louch as our Kennel Huntsman, he having hunted them in Mr. Hardwick's time; and he is now (1936), Kennel Huntsman to Mr. Wilmot, the present Master of the Weston Harriers. Louch is, and was a character, a grand fellow in Kennel but never a smile on his face and he hated all other servants. A brave horseman with the worst of hands, but he would get a blind horse over a gate or a rhine and never saw any fear—he is the same now. He first saw service under Jack Millier, Mr. Hardwick's Huntsman.

Old Jack Millier was another character. Coming home from hunting one day, he said to Hardwick, "Did you see that young fellow over riding Hounds to-day, Sir? I wish he would break his neck so long as he did not hurt himself." Another time, when his horse nearly went in while jumping a rhine from a stand, Old Jack said, "Hold up, 'Judge,' do you think you are a Jesus Christ a walking on the water?" Poor Old Jack Millier, he broke his neck from a Meet at Eldon Bow and probably went out as he would have wished—a fitting end to the life of a great sportsman. This occurred in 1896, so I am rather harking back, a common fault with Harriers, and that is my only excuse.

One season when I was hunting the Harriers, I had a run of bad luck, or whatever you like to call it, and could not kill for weeks. Coming home one night a farmer stopped me and asked if I had killed. I said "No," and he replied, "Well, why don't 'ee let Sidee Louch hunt 'em again." I took his advice, only to find out that Hounds would not go to Louch, and so, short of staying home, I had to go on till my luck improved. It took all the conceit out of me, and a very good thing too.

Louch had a small boy about five years old. I was walking down the Kennel lane one day and met him and he said, "Come along with I." "Where are you going?" I said, "To pick some blackberries." "Go on then," I said, "What's the matter with them?" and he replied, "I want you, they are higher up in the hedge than I can reach." On another occasion I found him with two bricks, one on top of the other, hitting them and shouting, "Gar—fighting again!"

When we took over the Harriers in 1907 we built new Kennels at Webbington. They were built more or less on the model of the Atherstone Kennels and we had nine loose boxes in a yard adjoining. We hunted the country four days a week regularly. When



FRANK AND MYSELF WITH OUR HARRIERS AT WEBBINGTON HOUSE

Frank took a six weeks' holiday to hunt. we used to make it five days the fifth week and six days in the sixth week. I have it on record that I rode one horse four days the last week, as we had used up most of the others. The Hounds we took over from Hardwick were all light coloured, and some white. They could hunt, but they were light of bone and with bad feet, so we introduced Foxhound blood and by keeping only light coloured whelps, in a few years the pack had improved out of all knowledge. We used Cotley and Taunton Vale blood as well and increased the number to forty couple.

We had some amazing sport during my seven years till the War put the lid on it. The farmers in our Hunt were the best fellows in the world. They nearly all hunted and they rode the best of horses, most of them bought at Bristol Fair and all Irish horses. We bought all our hunters from the farmers and we found that after a season or two in our water country they were fit to go anywhere.

Selby Lowndes, when he had the Wells Harriers, said that a Somerset farmer could put away and keep sober on more drink than most people could stand, and I quite agree with him.

In addition to what Frank did for the Mendip Hunt and for the Harriers, he held a Hunter Show annually for farmers only, when he put up £100 in prizes and generally bought a few horses. He used to give a free certificate to every farmer to put a mare to the thoroughbred stallion travelling the district.

The first Hunter Show was held in 1904 and excluding the War years a Show was held every year until 1930.

I think the following account of one of these Shows, held in 1913, will be of interest to people who used to attend them.

Mr. TIARKS' HARRIERS.

Annual Show of Hunters.

1913.

According to the tenets of a certain political party, it is little short of criminal to cultivate the habit of contentment and happiness in one's surroundings. Discontent is to be first incalculated, and the doctrine of grab afterwards to be preached. A few hours in the country yesterday away from everlasting politics were delightful enough to give peace and happiness for the time even to an advanced modern Radical. The particular function to which one would have liked to have invited the aforesaid politician—who, by-the-by, obsessed with the idea that he knows all about the land problem, is sure that the rural classes have great grievances which need remedying—was to a gathering at Webbington, a little place midway between Axbridge and Winscombe, delightfully situated in the hollow between the shoulder of Crook's Peak and Clifton Hill. True, it was in the main a countryman's gathering, and that type was represented by hundreds of individuals, yet it would have puzzled even Mr. Lloyd George to have found any visible signs of the tyranny under which he says the countryside of the kingdom is groaning. The weather reminded one of a really beautiful spring day, and out came the farmers from many a mile round. The occasion was Mr. F. C. Tiarks' ninth annual hunters' show, and the trials took place over a portion of the line of country used for the hunt steeplechases.

On the retirement of Mr. E. A. Hardwick, the pack was hunted by Mr. H. A. Tiarks of Webbington House, Axbridge, and associated with him is his brother, the gentleman whose liberal gift finds the prizes for the horses shown in the yearly competition at this show. The excellent relationship existing between these gentlemen and the farmers over whose lands the spanking pack of Harriers hunt is the best possible answer to the tirades of the great land hurster. Mr. Tiarks, or, indeed, both gentlemen, were pleased to see the farmers, and they were equally pleased to attend the fixture. A spirit of mutual respect has been engendered throughout the district, which makes more for the real good of the countryside than half-a-dozen Bedford or Swindon speeches. The arrangements were carried out under the direction of Mr. H. A. Tiarks, assisted by Mr. R. J. Dart (Weston-Super-Mare), and Mr. William Tilley (Loxton). Mr. F. C. Tiarks was also present, and took the keenest interest in the meeting. The judging was entrusted to the Rev. E. A. Milne, M.F.H., and Mr. P. W. Nickalls (class 1) and Mr. F. A. Hardwick and Mr. E. S. Petthuck (class 2). For the first-named class there were 29 hunters entered, and of these all turned out with one exception only. Entries were limited to horses under six years old and the *bona fide* property of the exhibitor, and in his

possession by October 1st, 1913. Horses to be eligible for a prize had to be certified to be sound in wind and eyes. Entries were required to jump water, hedges, and timber, and a further stipulation was that no exhibitor could take more than two prizes in the class. In all there were seven prizes varying in value from £16 to £3, five highly-commendeds carrying the rosette and £2, and five h.c. and £1 apiece. The second class was for horses under four years old. The conditions ran that entries must be bred by a tenant farmer in the hunt, and exhibited by one. Should the exhibitor of a prize-winner not be the breeder, then a third of the award went to the breeder. Horses in this class were shown in hand, and not ridden. In this class there were 24 entries, and all paraded before the judges, making, like the preceding competition, a display highly creditable to the stables of the hunting farmers of the district.

When the meeting was inaugurated, nine years or so since, ten or a dozen entries were all that could be mustered. The liberality of Mr. F. C. Tiarks has had an excellent effect. It has been an inducement for the farmers to breed a better article, and with the result that these Harriers are followed by a field mounted in a manner which would do credit to a foxhunting district. Not only is it extremely satisfactory to note that quality has been fostered, but a larger number of farmers than formerly have been induced to breed a good cross-country poer. These classes, as judged, are infinitely more satisfactory than ring competitions. The entries are *bona-fide* hunters, and they have to do their duty over a line of natural country, such as they might be called upon to face when hare-hunting. The task of judging was essentially congenial to the well-known hunting men selected for the position, and right well they did their work. Every horse had its chance. Of course, they did the work required of them in the open country with their own riders up, but after this the judges got into the saddle, and tested the paces of each. This is satisfactory to the owners inasmuch as no one entry was in any way overlooked. It would be well if gentlemen in other hunting districts got up similar trials of hunters, for it is the most practical way of arousing interest in the breeding of a good-stamp horse. At yesterday's enjoyable function everything passed off well. The horses on the whole did well, showing themselves to be reliable performers and well-mannered. The number of outside-the-hunt applications for cards were unusually numerous this year. This points to the fact that Webbsington is acquiring a reputation far afield. It certainly was nobleable that there were a number of well-known hunting farmers and others from Gloucestershire and elsewhere present, apparently on the look-out for purchases for their own country. This is how things should be, and under the splendid encouragement of Mr. Tiarks the area of his Harriers should be a field where a well-made, reliable hunter can always be bought.

The following are the results of the judging:—

Class 1.—1st prize £10; F. Fear, Mark—Harkaway, bay gelding, 16 hands, 4 years. 2nd (£12), R. Frost, Park Farm, Brent Knoll, Cheero, brown gelding, 16 hands, 5 years. 3rd (£10), A. Vowles, Causeway Farm, Mark—Banshee, bay gelding, 16.1 hands, 5 years. 4th £8, S. Bethell, The Laurels, Banwell—Prince Charming, chestnut gelding, 16 hands, 4 years. 5th £6, T. Wilce, Chilton Polden, Bridgwater—Togo II, bay gelding, 16 hands, 5 years. 6th 15/- F. Fear, Mark—Shamrock, bay gelding, 15.5 hands, 3 years. 7th £3, Henry Bethell, The Laurels, Banwell—St. Blaize, chestnut gelding, 16 hands, 4 years. The five highly commendeds (worth £2) were awarded to: A. Vowles, Causeway Farm, Mark. 2. S. Bethell, Banwell. 3. H. J. Ham, Fernbank, Chapel Allerton, and E. P. Stevens, Hatfieldborough, Brent Knoll. The other five highly commendeds of £1 each were: A. Amesbury, Whitegate Farm, Bleadon. W. T. Igar, Wainbridge, Mark. E. Bailey, Badgworth. H. N. Day, Court Farm, Worle; and J. Gibbs, Green Farm, Biddisham.

Class 2.—1st Prize £6, Mr. H. Gordon, Wolverhill—Spearmint, chestnut gelding, 16 hands, 3 years, bred by A. Beard, Wolverhill. 2nd £4, S. A. Hooper, Withy, Huntspill, exhibitor and breeder—Gallop, brown gelding, 16 hands. 3rd £3, C. House, Lympsham, exhibitor and breeder—Gay Lad, chestnut gelding, 15.2 hands, 2 years. 4th £2, A. Curry, Wolverhill, Banwell, exhibitor and breeder—Starlight brown gelding, 15.3 hands, 3 years. Five highly commendeds (£1 each): T. W. Plappen, Hewish, A. Criddle, Banwell, C. Bailey, Compton Bishop, Axbridge; H. A. Frost, North Yeo, Edingworth; and W. J. Coleman, Yarrow Farm, Mark. In reserve to these highly commendeds the following were selected: F. Amesbury, Loxton, Axbridge. H. Lee, Christon, Axbridge; and H. Igar, Whitehouse, Edingworth.

For the special jumping class three prizes, £5, £3, and £2, there was a good entry, and the results were announced as follows.—1st, Banshee, shown by A. Vowles, Causeway Farm, Mark. 2nd, Spearmint, H. Gordon, Wolverhill. 3rd, Burchill, chestnut gelding, 16 hands, S. Sheldon, Cheddar.

In Hardwick's time it was the custom to have a huge feast before hunting and Hounds seldom moved off before 1 o'clock. I everyone over rode Hounds from sheer excess of "spirit." I changed all that and we met at 11 and moved off at 11.15. After probably a couple of good hunts we went to a shed or a farm and had a few sandwiches and a drink or two and then went on hunting again. This did not happen at every Meet, but only when farmers wished to entertain their friends.

To hark back again to 1907. I had as my whipper-in W. Holley and he was with me as stud groom until 1936. He was a first-rate whipper-in to Harriers as he had no voice and was a marvel across country and very keen. He could stand a cursing better than anyone I ever had. I always mounted him on young horses to make for me and they had to go in or over. I should say that Holley averaged two duckings a week; I did about the same. As I seldom lifted Hounds, Holley was only really necessary if we changed hares, and then to see him get to their heads and turn them was an eye-opener to a good many. One night, coming home in the dark across some fields, up got a hare, off went Hounds and Holley after them. He stopped them after jumping several rhines in the dark. There was very little wire then, and there is not much now, but whenever Holley and I saw any, we generally went and removed it, either on the way home or the next day. No one seemed to mind—great fellows these Somerset farmers.

The longest point I have had with a hare was from Loxton to Watchfield, near Highbridge six miles as the crow flies and straight, and this run is recorded in a novel. In it the authoress takes my Hounds and my Kennels and my house and turns me into the heroine, minus my language. The heroine was not a modern girl evidently. At the end of this six mile point there were four of us left; myself, Holley, Bernard Smyth-Piggot and Alec Champion. We visited every farmhouse on the way home and had a drink at each. I remember later offering Smyth-Piggot a couple of hundred for his horse. Luckily, it was subject to the vet. It failed to pass and I was glad, as £50 was about the value of it. Alec Champion is still hunting and still going the best.

It is invidious to mention any one as particularly good to Hounds, but I think I would have given the plum in those days to Ford Tilley, the well-known farmer and horse dealer. I should doubt if he had an equal when mounted on his good mare

"Swallow." I have seen him sail over 20 feet of water, and there was nothing that could stop those two, not even Hounds sometimes. Ford Tilley hunted to the last, though increasing weight and age took the vim out of him, as it has out of me. I think he rode 19 stone as against my 18 stone. At the first Point-to-Point we ever had at Webbington he won every race, which I should think would be a record. (He died in 1937).

The best horse I ever had I bought of Ford Tilley for £40. I named him "Golightly" as a certain Captain Golightly tried him and turned him down, for which I have ever been grateful. This horse could jump anything and always at a hell of a pace whatever the obstacle.

I once cured a fellow of riding too close to Hounds in the following way. I carried a midget camera in my waistcoat pocket and took one photo of Hounds in full cry and another of this fellow jumping a fence, both on the same film. When it was developed it shewed him jumping into the middle of the pack; I sent it to him. The result was an extremely apologetic letter saying that he had never realised what he had done, that he quite appreciated why I was always swearing at him and that he must have thoroughly deserved it.

In later years, while hunting with Arthur Wilmot who hunts the Weston Harriers, I have often thought what a brute I was to my Field in comparison to him. He never says a hard word unless absolutely compelled to do so, and he is one of the best to go to Hounds. He has to put up with a lot more than I had to, as the majority of the people who hunt with him never seem to care what Hounds do so long as they get plenty of jumping. Every Master, and especially one who hunts Hounds himself, does like to know that people appreciate Hound work, and the people that do not are only fit to hunt with draghounds. I wonder how many people who

hunt now know a Hound by name or ever see the individual qualities of any Hound in the pack. Perhaps when I was young I was the same, and so one must not cavil at the enthusiasm of the young for galloping and jumping. I must say that everyone hunts with the present pack of Weston Harriers who can raise a horse, and there is no keener or braver Field in England. They all go, young and old, and they are the most friendly people I have ever met.

During my seven seasons as Master and Huntsman of these Harriers, I may say that my brother Frank was the best fellow in the world to me. He was, and is, most popular with everybody, and deservedly so. Always cheery, always a word for everyone, always the life and soul of every party, always an eye for a girl or a horse—and the two go together—he made hunting the happiest thing in the world for all of us. I think he is responsible for the saying, "Choose a girl as you would a horse—Good legs and feet and a kind eye." I know he is a very good judge of both, and perhaps best at the former. At the age of 61 (1935) he is still hunting and playing polo, and still has a twinkle in his eye for the opposite number.

All the happiest memories of my life have been mixed up with the farmers in our Harrier country. I never had to ask if I could meet anywhere, I just went when I liked and I was always welcomed.

After the war, a pack of Foxhounds was again started on Mendip in 1920 and called the Wells and Stanton Drew Foxhounds, thus embracing the country of those two well-known packs of Harriers that were at their best before the war. Mr. Rouse-Boughton was Master, but he only survived one season and then Mr. C. Hilton Green took them over and the pack again became known as the Mendip. My brother then came forward and put up practically all the money to find Hounds and build Kennels and he continued right up to 1928 to finance the whole

show. Though he is my brother, I yet say that he has done as much for foxhunting and hunting generally as any man living.

Mr. Hilton Green shewed great sport with his pack of mixed Harriers and Foxhounds. The Roundway Harriers were bought by my brother and other Hounds were collected from Foxhound packs. In the Minutes of the General Meeting of the Hunt it was put that if a fox was not found within a reasonable time a hare had to be hunted. This was inserted at the request of the supporters of the old Wells pack of Harriers. One day, when a fox was hard to find, I asked a lady friend of the Master to go up and ask him to find a hare. She did so, and to his eternal credit he did not answer her back; but one can imagine his feelings as he is now Master and Huntsman of the Cottesmore. I well remember a picture of a man with an arm in a sling and a bandage over one eye, who was reported to have asked the Huntsman of the Belvoir if they still hunted fox and hare.

Chetty Green was, and is, a marvellous tellow with Hounds. A wonderful eye for a country, a good horseman, on the heavy side, but horses were machines to him, and I have seen him jump a gate while casting, and I doubt if he even knew he had jumped it. Hounds loved him and came to him, and he would spend hours in Kennel with them. He had, and deservedly, a great attraction to the fair sex, and I think this and hunting go together, myself being the one great exception.

Chetty was one day exercising Hounds and a fellow in a motor car came a bit too close to Hounds to please him and Chetty let go a bit of his best language. The motorist rather had him when he replied "How do you know my pedigree so well, Sir?" He also cursed me into heaps several times, and I only retorted "Oh, Mr. 'Awkins, and in front of ladies too!" I see a great future for him as a Huntsman and as one of the very best fellows in the world, who ought to go very far in the hunting world.



MENDIP HUNT IN FULL CRY.

During his first season with the Mendip Hunt he was never in good health, suffering from anæmia and eventually he broke down completely. Only his pluck carried him through that season and then he had to go into a nursing home and was cured I think by a certain Dr. Hunter. (What's in a name?).

The second season we got Will Morris, a one time Huntsman to the South Durham, with a great nerve, and he carried the horn with conspicuous success and shewed the very best of sport.

Then Chetty carried on again the following season with Morris as his First Whip, and it was a wonderful combination of science and loyalty. I should say that that season was the best the Mendip ever had. We had two great artists at the game, a great Huntsman and a first rate Whipper-in who knew from experience what a Huntsman expected of him and who did his duty loyally and well, and those two made the Mendip Hunt known and respected. At the end of his third season with the Mendip, Chetty having refused the Belvoir, was offered the North Cotswold, and to the great regret of us all he accepted it. I then took on the Mastership of the Mendip, really nominally, as my brother put up all the money, and we retained Morris as Huntsman.

We carried on for four seasons, and I may say that Morris showed great sport, second to none, and to prove it the Blackmore Vale followers used to run special trains to come and hunt with us on Saturdays. They liked the sound going on Mendip where you are always on the top of the ground. As I rode 18 stone this helped me very much to keep at the head of my field; and I must pay tribute to my horse "Gaza" who could always carry me right in front; and unless a Master can be there, he has no right to be as rude to his field as I fear I was. As I write I am looking at a picture of this horse over my writing table.

I should say that Tubby Wilson had as much to do as anyone in making the Mendip Hunt what it was. A great organizer, and lots of tact, which he needed when I was Master, as I do not think we often saw eye to eye over anything; but he certainly was a great help in every way.

My four seasons as Master of the Mendip (1924-28) with Morris as Huntsman were a great success and I owe it all to the way he hunted Hounds and to his never failing tact with the farmers. He would always tell me when I ought to go and see any disgruntled farmer. I always treated Morris as if he were my best friend, and we used to go together to see the farmer and not ask the Secretary or any of the Committee to help. Rightly or wrongly I always considered that the Secretary and the Committee were there to see to the financial side of the Hunt and that whenever there was any trouble the Master's personal touch, especially with Morris to help, could best get to the root of the matter.

I learnt more about Foxhunting during Morris' reign than I did at any time in my life. He was and is worth studying. A great horseman, quiet with Hounds, and as quick as a policeman is to find fault with a motorist. He was always with his Hounds and he and they were always on the best of terms.

Morris got laid up from a very bad fall during the season 1927 and I had the temerity to hunt Hounds for him. I had seven days and killed six foxes and marked five to ground; but I take no credit to myself as I just let the Hounds do it all. I had the novice's luck to have a marvellous scent every time I went out.

I shall never forget the first day I tried to take Hounds to the Meet. The second whipper-in, J. Haynes, kept calling to me that Hounds were going back to Kennel. I just went on a bit faster and eventually got to Rodney Stoke with about three-quarters of the pack. I threw several pounds of biscuits about and waited for

the field to arrive. I saw consternation written on most of their faces when they saw me in charge. However, we had a fairly good day and managed to chop a fox pretty soon and then Hounds came to me. We had one really good hunt from Priddy Hill to Wookey Hole Paper Works, and it was during this that Joan Beauchamp demolished a cast iron sign post with her head and made history as she has a habit of doing; she is now wearing an iron collar having broken her neck last season. The end of this hunt amused me as I was on foot in the Paper Works and a man said to me "If you want your fox you take the first turning on the right and you will find him on the second door on the left." I rather felt as if I was being directed to the lavatory. However we caught him there and ate him. It was the wettest day I ever remember and we made it a bit more so by calling at Glencot on our way home, when G. Hodgkinson wetted our insides as well.

Unlike some hunts we welcomed strangers and I often delayed moving off if I knew their train was late.

We kept our horses, that is the ones I and my brother rode, at Priddy Hill and our house there was an open house to anyone who wanted tea, or gruel for their horses. We have a sign outside of Jorrocks, and on at least two occasions our house was thought to be a public house and people asked for their bill. One girl, who wanted to leave her horse for the night, was told by my stud groom, Holley, that she must ask me first, and her reply was "Surely this is a livery stable!" She was very surprised to hear that we often mounted people and that they were not expected to pay. I know this girl will forgive me if she ever reads this when I say that she was very ignorant on all matters connected with hunting, and perhaps she will also forgive me for the way in which I tried to put her right.

Morris, in my opinion, has a great knowledge of the kind of Hound required in the country in which he hunts. In four seasons he bred us a pack to be proud of. Necks, shoulders and ribs were always his first consideration, and legs and feet after that; and the blood he used ensured the nose and drive required to make a perfect pack. I never questioned his judgment as I knew he had been at the job most of his life, while I was only beginning to learn. During the four seasons that Morris hunted Hounds for us he killed over 100 brace. I expect he does that now in one season.

I have just come across a letter from my brother, written in April, 1927, and it is as follows:

My dear Herman,

I have been meaning to write to you for some time about the Hunt. As you know, I have only been able to get out about seven times this season, and even this would have been less if you had not decided to go on until the end of April.

As you know the Hunt, outside the cost of our own stables at Priddy Hill Farm, costs me about £6,000 per annum so taking all in all I feel like giving up.

You have worked the country up to a position which is as good as any country and if the Members of the Hunt are really keen to go on hunting the country on the far side of the Gorge either two or three days a week, they ought to be able to get a new Master. I have spent a fortune on the Kennels, and I can lend them 25 couple of Hounds as I promised. If on the other hand there is not enough financial support to find a new Master of Foxhounds I daresay the Farmers will want a pack of Harriers and sport of some kind will go on.

I know that you will understand how I feel about this, even if some others do not -anyhow I have made up my mind to give up and feel I ought to tell you now before next season starts.

During our fourth season on Mendip we decided to give up our Mastership and start a pack in what was known as our Monday country, that is all the country west of Cheddar Gorge

In our original contract with the Committee of the Mendip Hunt, we had agreed to hunt two days a week, Wednesdays and Saturdays, east of Cheddar Gorge, and to have bye-days west of the Gorge when we liked. This bye-day was always on a Monday and eventually we actually hunted a regular three days a week. Thus when we gave up the Mendip and started a pack for the Monday country only, it was suggested by people who ought to have known better, that we were taking over the best part of the country. Actually we turned our Monday country into a two day a week country, and, but for the goodwill of the Master of the Weston Harriers, Mr. A. Wilmot, and his sporting farmers whose territory we invaded fairly often, we could not have hunted two days a week regularly. This country was full of foxes and so this made it possible to find every day and many times a day; during my three seasons there was only one blank day. This Monday country is, I should say, the worst and roughest and hilliest of any country in England, and its only saving grace was our hunts over the wonderful water country of the Weston Harriers. Here you meet rhine after rhine, with occasional main rhines of 12 feet of water and more, and they take some doing.

I have always been lucky in my horses, and in spite of my ever-increasing weight they have always seemed to stand up to it and enjoy carrying me.

I was well served during my three seasons here by my first whipper-in and K.H., Jack Haynes, son of Will Haynes, one time Huntsman to the Waterford and later to the North Warwickshire. Jack was several seasons with Morris, and was later his second whipper-in, and I took him on as my first whipper-in and K.H., as I have always preferred young men to old ones who know too much. I like to mould them into my own way of thinking. I always found Jack the most loyal servant, topping in Kennel and a great man to Hounds. We had three years together which would be hard to

beat. He afterwards went as first whipper-in and K.H. to the Waterford to follow in his father's footsteps and later to the Minehead Harriers.

When we gave up the Mendip Hounds in 1928 Mr. Pickersgill took them on for one season, and shewed good sport.

Capt. G. Hodgkinson then took them on and shewed wonderful sport for his three years with them. A great horseman and a good knowledge of Hound work. I always used to think he used his horn too much, but he had a very musical note on it and incidentally he could play the National Anthem on it, which I doubt if many amateur Huntsmen can do now. His one fault was that he was jealous of anyone who went better than he did, which was not often, but what I have never been able to understand is a Master of a pack of Foxhounds turning against his old Hunt and not hunting with them, in spite of living and owning land in the Country. Perhaps the Mendip Hunt Committee upset him too, as they have others in the past.

Capt. Hodgkinson was followed by Capt. and Mrs. Parkes for two seasons, who shewed fair sport; but they were not popular, and now (1935-36), Capt. R. Corbett has hunted them two seasons and has shewn the sport we are used to. A very light weight and a good horseman, he takes a bit of catching when Hounds really run as they do on Mendip with nothing to stop them except the ever increasing number of cars sending out their foul fumes and always seeming to try and spoil a hunt. Many of them belong to farmers who cannot afford to keep a horse to hunt, and for that reason one has to be tolerant with them, and I say now, as I have said before, that there are no better sportsmen than the Mendip farmer and his wife and children. I know I got a welcome wherever I went, and we are still the best of friends, and they have told me they would take a cursing from me at any time and I take

my hat off to them for it, as I used to be pretty bad at the game. Mendip farmers have to work hard to make a living, and I have seen many a stranger go through a gate, held open by the man, whose land he was riding over, and never say "Thank you." Ignorance I suppose, or a bit of hairy heel, and that sort do not see the end of a hunt, whether human or animal.

I may be wrong, and I usually am, but it strikes me as a tragedy that so many amateurs try to hunt Hounds nowadays. There are great outstanding ones that can hunt and breed Hounds, such as the late Capt. Esme Arkwright, whom I never had the pleasure of knowing, though I know of him, Mr. I. Bell, whose knowledge of Hounds is second to none, Mr. C. Hilton Green, who would never be anything but the best at the job, and of course the Duke of Beaufort; but surely the moderate ones, if they really care about the sport, ought to like to see a professional shew the field the sport that they themselves are only beginning to learn. It must be heart-breaking for a first class whipper-in to see the Master making all the mistakes that he could put him right in; but he has just to see them and say nothing. It is not for the good of future Foxhunting that a whipper-in can feel that he may never be wanted to hunt Hounds, and there will be less and less good fellows to take it on. In my opinion a professional huntsman is 50 per cent. better than an average amateur in that his life as a huntsman depends on the sport he shews, and he does shew more sport in most cases in that he will hunt the whole country, whether good or bad, while most amateurs will only hunt their best country and not draw the big coverts from which they know they may not get a hunt. If a fellow puts the money up to hunt a country, why not let a professional shew him how to do it, instead of making a complete fool of himself in front of a loyal field who are too nice to tell him so? However, if hunting is to go on (and it will I suppose) we have

got to put up with the fellow who foots the bill and take our chance that Hounds will help us out with a good fox in front of them, and then the Devil take the hindmost.

I feel I am rather digressing from my subject; but I had to let a little steam off, and feel all the better for it. If I were a "Stubbins" I could be a bit more amusing. I have never met him, but he has a keen sense of humour, backed up I should say, by a drop of Scotch, and perhaps more than one.

My last season hunting Hounds was the best I ever had and I wish to record certain things while very fresh in my memory. Knowing that it would probably be the very last time I should be hunting Hounds, I naturally tried to make it the best - the feeling that it would be the last, and that I should never again have Hounds, rather saddened me at times, and I used to wish that I could go out before my Hounds had to go. I expect there are many others who have felt the same.

We started cub hunting on August 11th and finished on October 21st, killing $8\frac{1}{2}$ brace and marking 7 brace to ground. The Opening Meet was at my house on October 25th and a large crowd assembled. Sport was only moderate, but we managed to get hold of one old fox.

The season was marred for me by my breaking my left arm; and to make matters worse Jack Haynes broke his wrist the following week. As my second whipper-in had not sufficient experience to carry the horn I was in a dilemma, for I did not wish to have to keep Hounds in Kennel at this time, January. There was no man in my Hunt who had the necessary time or experience, so I decided to ask a girl aged 19, Miss E. Timmis. She had hunted all her life with a very famous pack of Hounds, the Oakley, until she had come to Mendip two years previously, and she had a wonderful eye for a country. I knew she would do

the job all right as all animals loved her and she knew most of the Hounds. She walked them out for three days and on the fourth day hunted them. Jack put on 26½ couple so that if any came back there would still be a good number left; but to our great surprise she got them all to the Meet, had a good day, and brought them all home at night. She hunted them on six days, killing 2 brace and marking 1½ brace to ground. She showed wonderful sport, was very quiet with Hounds, and always seemed to have the knack of making a right cast every time she had to lift them. I got Geoffrey Leacroft to act as second whipper-in to her, Gordon Ash doing first whipper-in; and I may say that Gordon improved out of all recognition during this period. I attribute it to the fact that he knew he had the chance of a lifetime, and took it. He went to the Barlow when we gave up.

I shall never forget our last day. We finished at 9 p.m. on the top of Cheddar Gorge and got home about 10.30. Had a good dinner, six of us, and I know I drowned my sorrows in fizz, and then we all went to the Kennels to say good-bye to them, as half the pack were off next day to the Cottesmore and the rest to the North Atherstone. When we left the Kennels a very stupid policeman said I had left my car outside without a light. The result was that I was fined £1 in Axbridge Police Court for calling him a . . . fool, and if ever a fellow was he was, and so were the Magistrates who fined me; but you cannot expect the law to have any feelings.

We gave up our Harriers after seven seasons because of the War, and we gave up the Foxhounds after seven seasons because of finance, and it is only after that number of seasons that one can breed a good pack of Hounds; but I know that our pack have done well where they have gone, which is a very great consolation. I will conclude this with a word to say that I was always served well by my Hunt Servants and Strappers, a very loyal lot of fellows,

I had rather a good horse in 1913 called "Marquis." He had won our Farmers' Race for three years in succession when belonging to Mr. H. N. Day, who always had and bred good horses. He went wrong in the wind and I gave Day £60 for him and tubed him. He was 17.2 and up to 15 stone. In 1913 and again in 1914 I won our Heavy Weight Race of 14 stone 7 lbs.; I rode 15 stone 7 lbs. the first year and 15 stone 10 lbs. the second and each time he won in a canter. He also won the Sparkford Vale Harriers' 16 stone Race. He was not a good hunter but loved racing in heavy going; incidentally he was lame in both forelegs and one hind leg. If you hit him in a race he faded out for the time being, but always came again; I rode my last race on him without whip or spur and he always knew just when to make his effort and all you had to do was to sit still and leave it to him. I believe many a race is lost now from the jockey thinking he knows better than his horse does, and when you see them finishing with their ears laid back you will probably agree that only their game-ness carried them through, and then you say the jockey rode a good race when the horse could tell you a different tale.

In 1932 I bought a horse called "Greybird II" off a farmer in the Weston Harrier Country for £25; he had won a lot of Point-to-Points and he won several for me in Ladies' Races. He always finished with his ears pricked. His last race was the West Somerset Ladies' Race in 1935 which he won, and he finished going apparently very strong and then collapsed and died. It was anyhow to have been his last race as he was an old horse and a great pal. A good end to a rather remarkable life. I have never been able to find out his breeding but I am certain he was a thoroughbred. A grand hunter and as honest as they make, and I took him home and buried him in the stable yard with his head towards his old loose box.

In 1933 I bought "Soliman's Ring" also a great horse. This is what these two horses have done since 1932—

GREYBIRD II (bought 1932).

- 1933 Mendip Members'.
- 1934 Taunton Vale Ladies'.
- 1934 West Somerset Ladies'.
- 1934 Mendip Members'.
- 1935 West Somerset Ladies'.

SOLIMAN'S RING (bought 1933).

- 1933 Punchestown.
- 1934 Weston Harriers Ladies'.
- 1935 Taunton Vale Open.
- 1935 Blackmore Vale Open.
- 1935 Mendip Members'.
- 1936 Weston Harriers Ladies'.
- 1936 West Somerset Ladies'.
- 1936 Wylve Valley Open.
- 1936 Mendip Members'.

I had a Children's Meet every season in the Christmas Holidays, but I let others come out too. I let one boy hunt Hounds and stayed with him till they found, and had girls as first whipper-in and second whipper-in; and my orders to my whippers-in were that no gate was to be opened. I had the satisfaction of seeing my boy huntsman and my two girl whippers-in take a good gate in great style. The only thing I did not enjoy on those days was having to control my usual bad language as I did not want the young ones to go home and say what they might have heard. Incidentally, when I was had up for swearing at a policeman, the words the constable said I had used were reported in the local paper as ———, but a small girl told her father that she could fill in all the blanks as she had heard me on a hunting day. I expect she was right, but the constable gave Ananias 20 lengths start and won easily.

Herbert Nell, now a Master of Foxhounds again, has always been a help to me, as I know he has been to other ignorant people.

I have known him a great many years, and admire him, and his clothes, and his thumbstick. I was once rather shocked, walking around his farm at Yate Rocks, to find he had wire in his fences. In my agreements with my tenants, wire is not allowed on my farms, and Hounds have to be welcome. But then, Herbert Nell is Herbert Nell. There is no more to be said.

The Duke and Duchess of Beaufort have always been nice to me, and I expect they are to everybody. They will retain their popularity always, being out to do anything for anybody, and you only meet that in the best bred people. It is the climbers who have to be careful to whom they speak.

My best friends are the farmers in the Weston Harriers and Mendip countries, and a few of the Berkeley farmers. I still remember a well-known correspondent of the Berkeley Hunt, and others, coming hunting with us when we had Hounds. My brother mounted about six of them. We were drawing a small gorse covert and the fox went away, and he used his voice a treat. I am afraid I said to him "Shut up—have you never seen a fox before?"; he heard of it a long time after, but he forgave me. Why is it that people will not realise that you pay your hunt servants to make a noise, and often too much? Perhaps it is the thrill that every sportsman worthy of the name gets when he sees a fox break. I know I have always got a sudden pain in my chest, whether from excitement or funk I do not know. If I see a fox in the summer, I still get a thrill.

Since Captain Corbett has been Master of the Mendip I have had a great admiration for his whipper-in and Kennel Huntsman, Tom Healey. Brought up to it by the late Esme Arkwright, he has been through the mill. He has often had to be first and second whipper-in, and has done it all well. A very good horseman with a good voice, and always in the right place. I think he

gets his Hounds too much on the big side, but that is a matter of opinion. Mine were always on the light side. I think he knows more about hunting than many a Master, which would not be difficult, as he has been at it so many more years.

I think there is no need to say any more about Morris or Chetty Green, except to compare them in that order as huntsmen, giving Morris the preference, being a professional.

Arthur Wilmot, Master of the Weston Harriers, always did his best for me when I hunted foxes in his Harrier country, and is still one of my best friends. Another is Major Hodgson, Master of the Sparkford Vale Harriers, who has a reputation for swearing. A nephew of mine, a sailor, was hunting with him lately, and a girl said to him "Have you ever heard language like that?" My nephew said "It is child's play to my Uncle Herman Tiarks -do you know him?" and she said "I do not know him, but I know of him." I told Hodgson about this, and he said in future he would say "Nana Pundy Magan" which is in the Tamil language and I have the translation.

I have mentioned Geoffrey Leacroft in connection with Miss Timmis hunting my Hounds. When I was Chairman of the Mendip Hunt Point-to-Point Committee, Geoffrey acted as unpaid secretary for two seasons, and did it right well. Always cheery, and very popular with everybody, especially the fair sex. He has one fault, in common with me, that he does himself too well. He is hunting in Ireland next season, and we all say "Cherchez la femme." However, they have not completely got him yet. He is too promiscuous for that, and I should be sorry for any girl who married him. He is a great friend of mine, or I should not risk telling the truth about him. Lately I had occasion to write to a celebrated Master of Foxhounds and mentioned I was writing a book on my 50 years' hunting. His reply was "It is dangerous to

write the truth nowadays." At one meeting of the Hunt Committee it was suggested that we should have other members of the Hunt on the Point-to-Point Committee, but I objected, and said there were no gentlemen on our Committee. We were only farmers, and wanted to keep our Committee as such, and this we did. The farmers on my Committee were the best of the Mendip Hunt, and they and Geoffrey Leacroft did all the work. I did nothing except act as Chairman at meetings, and pay for our drinks. At our 1936 Point-to-Point Meeting we made over £200 profit, and I say you must have either a farmer Committee or one composed entirely of gentlemen (save the word). The two do not mix. I have always got on with farmers, as I listen to what they have to say, which is always sense. Get Alfie Oaks and his hat going, and any Committee meeting will be a success. He has often taken a fiver off me. A grand fellow, Alfie, mad as they make them, and what keen fox hunter is not. I know I used to be proud of it.

I should like to mention Frank's boy Edward, one of the best that ever lived. He was keen on hunting and keen on seeing the world, which he did on a motor lorry through East, South, and West Africa with a pal of his, after which he came home and took to flying. He and one of his best friends, Eddie Somerset, were killed flying in September, 1929, and his other best pal, Grubby Grosvenor, was killed flying about a year afterwards. These three were great pals, and it is a strange coincidence that they all met it in the same way. Life is like that, and all the best people go first.

The best fellows hunting on Mendip in the 1935 and 1936 season were the Gunners from Salisbury Plain. They are encouraged to hunt, which is quite right and proper. I know that in 1914, anyone who tried to get into the Air Force was accepted if he had hunted in preference to the fellows who had not, simply because hunting gives you that sense to know what to do in any

emergency. These Gunner boys went the best, and have manners, which are so lacking in the younger civilian members of a Hunt. Two senior officers hunted with us too, Colonel Landon, whose loss we shall all feel, a very gallant man to Hounds and a good fellow, and Major Scott Watson, who takes hunting very seriously. I do not think I have ever seen him smile. Goes the best, and once asked me why I did not have my earths stopped properly when Hounds marked in a rabbit hole. However, I am walking a couple of puppies for him, as he is Master of the Bulford Harriers, and we are good friends still. I have also a couple of Cottesmore puppies, and a Mendip puppy, which I have turned over to Mrs. Corpe at Priddy Hill.

Mendip puppies do not do well when first sent out nowadays, but improve later. Perhaps it is the Welsh blood in them, which it always seems to me a pity to use, as Welsh Hounds will hunt anything from a cat upwards. I do not think that anyone who has studied Hound breeding in its best aspects would introduce Welsh blood into a good pack of English foxhounds. The fact that you can get Welsh whelps given you goes to show that they are not of much value. Take the present Mendip pack (1936). They are full of Welsh blood, and yet when they kill a fox they won't break it up, partly I think because they are not allowed to when they catch it; and anyone with any knowledge knows that on a hot cub-hunting morning, if they are beaten off a cub when it is warm, they do not want it when it is cold. It is either that or their Welsh blood. When we gave up the Mendip in 1928 and left the Hounds to the country, we said that no Welsh blood was to be used; but later we gave the Hounds to the country with some misgiving.

I have just read in "The Field" of the 17th October 1936 an article called "Agriculture and The Chase," and it seems to me to be an apology to the farmers from ignorant members of a Hunt. Take the ordinary crowd of followers of a fashionable

pack. Half of them hunt because it is the thing to do, and the other half hunt because they love it; the latter are the people who help to keep foxhunting going. When Morris went to the Berkeley after we had given up the Mendip, I heard it said that his worst fault was that he got away too quick on his fox; probably because some dear old gentlemen had not finished their cigars, and I expect they left all the gates open in their probably leisurely attempt to follow him. In the Mendip country very few gates are left open simply because most of them won't open, and you will see all the field jump them. If they are broken, it is probably by a farmer on a raw three-year-old. I know now of a couple of friends of mine who live on Mendip who are hunting with the Beaufort simply because here they have mostly to jump wired walls or gates. Personally, I have always loved jumping gates because the horse knows exactly what he has to do. It is the safest obstacle you can meet, and if you go fast enough and do have a fall, you will go clear of your horse.

Not long ago on Mendip I rode over a small field of wheat. I heard later that the farmer was much annoyed. I sent him a bottle of whisky through my friend Alfie Oaks, and this was his reply.

Dear Mr. Tiarks,

Please accept my best thanks for your much appreciated gift. I might say that whisky in March is an early and somewhat unusual crop from a field of wheat. I should like to think that you might take an early opportunity, whenever you pass this way, in stopping and participating in this early harvest festival. Again many thanks.

Yours truly,

C. A. R. Emery.

After a wet day's hunting the heavy rain will fill up all the tracks left by horses, and a bottle of whisky will help a bit more.

I have written before of bad manners in the hunting field, and I think it is just because a lot of uncouth people are hunting

now that we meet it. Only people bred and brought up in the country know anything about farmers and their troubles, and know every farmer by sight; but the majority of successful shopkeepers, tailors, etc. make hunting almost impossible. I remember hearing a story about the late King Edward VII and his tailor, who was invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace. "A mixed party, your Majesty," he said to the King, who is reported to have replied "You cannot expect them all to be tailors". This is, I think, what our modern hunting field is composed of. We must, however, forgive their ignorance and want of manners, because they put up the money which keeps a good many packs going. I used to subscribe £250 a year to the Mendip when I gave up, and later £100 a year, and now that I am not hunting I am paying the ordinary subscription, and I am most unpopular.

When we had our private pack of Foxhounds from 1928 to 1931, we asked Hugh Tyssen to be our secretary, and right well he did the job. We also had about six farmers to handle the poultry claims in their districts, and left them to settle their claims without consulting Tyssen or myself first. I have always believed that a man claiming for poultry will take a fair price if he knows he can get it in cash straight away.

Fred Amesbury, one of my best and most loyal friends, was out to save me all he could from my poultry claims, and no one could take him in. A cantankerous old man, but one of the best sportsmen living. A marvellous shot, and a very good fellow. In his young days he used to make young horses, and when I asked him one day why he carried a plough line around his horse's neck, he replied "To help him out of a ditch if he goes in." I gave £100 for that horse, and never regretted it. Another I bought from him later I called after him, for it resembled him in many ways. A grand hunter, and could jump anything, but also could be cantankerous. I once put Hugh Tyssen on this horse, and he said it

would not go on after a jump, but it did not do this with anyone else. I discovered that Tyssen held on behind the saddle, and it objected to having its back touched. Tyssen is now about 70 and is still hunting, and I have given it up at 60. Age, weight, and alcohol all help to lose your nerve for you, but he has not the latter trouble.

If any of you have read in Selby Lowndes' book about the Wells Harriers from 1895 to 1897, in which he says he bought a grey horse called "Flycatcher" off a Wells jobmaster, you will be interested to know that in 1896 I hired this horse for a day with the Weston Harriers. I was asked to meet it at Compton Bishop, about two miles from where I was then staying, and I sent my groom for it. It was a lovely great big grey horse, but my groom said "Don't ride it, sir, they have brought it behind a hearse, as they had someone to bury in Compton Bishop." The jobmaster's name, I think, was Walker. Being young, and thinking myself immortal, as all young people do, I did not care, and thought it a high joke. I never met Selby Lowndes, as I was not often in Somerset then, but I should think he was a great sportsman in every sense of the word, and his book is well worth reading. He allowed me to reprint the section referring to the Wells Harriers.

When we gave up our private pack in 1931, I took up polo in the summer, and had a marvellous lot of fun. Men and women riding hunters and cart horses on top of Shiplett. We had all sorts of horses, and when they got too tired we got off and played on foot. My old hunter had rather big feet, and one day he trod on the ball and buried it, and we never could find it. His name was "Colonel" and he was a great hunter. A grand horse, could jump twenty feet of water, any wall and any gate, and could not refuse or fall. All sorts of people have ridden him. He came from the Beaufort country, and Colonel P. Robinson bought him

for me, but he is now having a well-deserved rest. I do not sell my old horses. They live on until I think they suffer from cold in the winter, and then they go to the Kennels. A quicker end than many humans get.

A great character of the Mendip is Colonel Arthur Yatman, celebrated for his cough, and for loving to ride 20 miles to a meet and 20 miles back. Also for eating a whole pork pie, a loaf of bread, and a pound of butter for his tea. I know this is true, as my Hounds got in his house one evening and ate the lot. He once lent me a petrol lighter, which I forgot to return. The next season, cub-hunting, he complained to our new joint Master, Major Houston, that I had not returned it. I am sorry that I reminded him that I had given him two of my best old hunters that I had outgrown in weight. I believe I still have that lighter, and he has one of my horses. He had to get rid of the other, it was too much for him.

On one occasion we had a check, and the Master said "Do you hear Hounds marking?" I said "No, that is only Arthur coughing." Keep on coughing, Arthur, and help others in a fog, but do not let the Master think Hounds are marking! Never mind, a grand old man.

The season starting in 1936/7, Hounds met on September the 19th at my Mendip farm, Priddy Hill, and I was not well enough to go, but they found any amount of cubs and killed a brace.

My best covert, a thorn covert, planted on Morris's advice in 1926, is crabbed by some people because they say it is too thick. Colossal ignorance, and how Morris will laugh if he ever reads this. It always holds a fox, and if Hounds are any good they always go in.

Francis Wicksteed is, and always was, a great friend of mine and rode most of my Point-to-Point horses in the Harrier days, and was very successful. He does not hunt now, but gave it up as he could not afford it.

On October 3rd, 1936, I went out in a car with the Weston Harriers for their opening meet. I was a bit late, and then they had killed ten brace of hares, beating my record on Bleadon Level by half a brace. Hounds were on their way home and got a view of a hare in a field, and some of them went to it. Off goes Louch, out of a slippery road, over a blind twenty foot rhine, without a thought except to get to them. Later I saw his horse, on three legs and with a raw mouth. Though he is not a horseman, he is a first-rate man in Kennel and his Hounds always look the best. He is 60 years old, and no one can beat him across country.

The Mendip Hounds drew Priddy Hill on the 24th of October, coming on from their Fernhill meet, and arrived at twelve, and I was amazed and pleased to see at least ten brace of cubs in every direction. Morris used to ask to have cubs held up for a bit, and then let them go; he knew what many amateurs do not know, that a tired cub is caught in the open, and if he does get away he makes a great fox for the future. I do not believe there is a better huntsman, either professional or amateur, to-day than Will Morris, or a better man in Kennel. All farmers like him, and that is the crux of the matter; and where would foxhunting be without our farmers?

Let anyone who wants to know about the stiffest country in England follow the Weston Harriers, and I will guarantee he will get a wet shirt and wet pants, whatever horse he is on. I used to average two duckings a week, and I had the best of horses, not the half-broken colts they ride now.

On one occasion we had a hunt with the Harriers from Brent Knoll to Crooks Peak on a fox; we crossed several rivers, and had a long check at Biddisham. There was a fellow there in a cart, and I galloped across to him and said "Have you seen the fox?" He said "No sir, I am blind," and Hounds picked up the line by the cart where he was sitting.

I had a letter from a farmer's wife, and she said to me "I have a rick of hay for sale, and as my husband is dead I have no further use for it."

Two good friends of mine, Sam Woods and Tiff Gilmore, used to go hunting with the Quantock Staghounds in the summer. They were very fond of beer, and in the spring they walked over the Quantocks and buried bottles of beer at various places.

One of Frank's best remarks was when his wife had twins. He wired me "Twins, boy and girl, girl won by a length."

Another time, when I sent him up a horse I had bought for him, he wired, "I like his ox and his ass and everything that is his."

On one occasion, when motoring on to an early morning meet with the Mendip, I was a bit late, and I met Jack Haynes, who was second whipper-in, galloping back. I stopped him and said "What do you mean, galloping that horse on the road like that." He replied "Morris has forgotten his false teeth and can't blow his horn without them."

On another occasion a girl rode down to see me, and she said "I have a friend outside you would like to see." I said "Bring him in," and she brought her horse into my hall, and took her to the window, where she stood for half-an-hour, looking out.

Talking about the Mendip farmers, if they cannot get a horse over a wall, I have seen them back into it, knock the wall down, and get over it like that. Another habit they have is that, when galloping over other people's land, they leave every gate open: but when they are on their own land they take jolly good care to see that you shut them.

Lots of Masters of Hounds have told me that they cannot get enough puppies out to walk, as people say they do so much harm to the garden. In many hunts only the farmers walk puppies. I say, what is a chrysanthemum, or a dahlia, or any flower, to a fox? and take on a gardener who knows something about hunting. My own gardener is never happier than when he is digging out a fox or riding a horse for me. There are subscribers in every Hunt who will not walk puppies because they spoil their garden. Mine have the run of my garden.

In July, 1936, I was walking two puppies for the Mendip Hunt. A child staying in my house told me she had put the puppies in their "blue nursery." To my horror I discovered she meant my rather nice drawing room, and one of the puppies, named "Havoc," had certainly lived up to his name. Luckily my temper is better than it used to be, and one forgives a Hound puppy anything.

A very great friend of mine used to come down hunting with Frank, Ben Allsop by name. One day I went down a very steep hill with a stile at the bottom, and I found that I could get round this stile. He followed me down, and not realising that I had gone round it, he jumped it. There was a hell of a drop the other side, and he came down for six. He said to me afterwards "Did you jump that stile at the bottom?" and I said "I wasn't such a damn fool, I went round it."

Bob Glanville, of Westbury, near Wells, has had most successes of any member in Mendip Point-to-Points, and I should hesitate to say how many open races he has won. His horses were properly ridden to Hounds, and not just "qualified." He was also very successful before the war, and he rides a good race still, and goes well hunting.

Another fellow who goes well with the Mendip is George Thompson, and he is mad on hunting and Point-to-Pointing. I gave him his horse, "Corinthian," just to encourage him a bit. I like him in some ways—how can anyone help liking a true sportsman? There are very few of the real species. Lots of them think they are, but most of them miss the boat somewhere. Just to motor your horse to a meet and motor him home again, to leave every gate open and talk loudly at a check, is a by-product of after the war, and not the old-fashioned sportsmanship of the old days, when men had to ride to their Meet and home again, and knew every farmer in the Hunt, and, what is more, spoke to them. I wonder how many of the Mendip field know what farmer's land they are riding over! People who live in a hunt can do a lot of good in the summer if they will make friends with the farmers, instead of ignoring them altogether.

I want here to relate an instance of a Hound showing an extraordinary brain. We ran a fox up to a twelve-foot park wall, the fox had gone over, and Hounds were baying under the wall. One Hound, "Waggoner," one of the best Hounds I ever saw in my life, ran back twenty yards, took a run at the wall, and got over it.

I once ragged a girl rather badly, and she got her own back on me in a marvellous manner. I was living in a bungalow, and she had the check to get into my room at night. I never woke up, and she took some of my clothes. Besides that, she took away my false teeth. I was cub hunting the next day at Longwood and a farmer

came up to me and said "Were you in Longwood last night, sir?" I said "No, why?" and he said "Your pyjamas are over there with a notice stating they are Mr Tiarks' pyjamas."

Running a fox over Loxton Hams one day we ran through Whitehouse and on to Bleadon. I came up to a gate by the river at Bleadon, and a cart colt was standing across it; when it saw me it jumped slap into the river. There was a farmer there, and I said "What's the matter with your colt?" "Well," he said, "there was a lady came along just now, and she jumped the colt and the gate, and that is his trouble." This was Miss Timmis, on my horse, "Amesbury." I jumped more gates on him in my last season than I ever jumped before in two seasons. One day, led by a very gallant Gunner, then Geoffrey Learcroft, then myself, Hugh Tyssen said "Any other fools want to jump these gates?" "Yes, please," from Mrs. Corpe and she crashed at the third.

Ikey Bell was a very great friend of mine, and when we gave up the Mendip he asked me where I was going to hunt. I said, "With the Mendip." He said "Do you know the worst vermin any country can have?" I said "No," and he said "An ex-Master." I thoroughly appreciated it, and tried hard to keep my mouth shut, but failed badly in 1936.

The Rev. A. Kirke was one of the very best. We had a working arrangement with him that, if he came out hunting on Saturday, I and my Hunt servants went to church on Sunday. One Saturday night we were digging out a fox in Cheddar Wood, and he said "I shall have to be off now, as I have to prepare my sermon." I said "Can't you say something about this?" We all turned up at church the next day, and he gave as his text "Foxes have holes." At a puppy show I said to him "There is a subject for your sermon" and he gave as his text the next Sunday "Many are called but few are chosen." The arrangement was that if he came to our Meets we went to his.

He had a great sense of humour. On one occasion, when he had a touch of 'flu, he rang me up one Sunday morning and asked me if I would take that part of the service which a layman could. He said "I want you to read the psalms, as you cannot intone," and I agreed. Loxton Church is very small, and I am rather tall, and I could see right over the top of the chancel. All went well until in the psalms I read the verse "I am small and of no reputation." I am sorry to say the congregation could not read the next verse, and we had to skip that one.

Once I was riding with Colonel Huntley Spencer, and he asked me, at the end of the day's hunting, if I knew where his stupid children were. Later on in the season, when we were drawing Coles' Drain, and I was Field Master, the Master asked me if I would try to stop the fox going back to Emborough Wood. Several of us rode and headed him off and got him going in the right direction, when Huntley Spencer, not understanding the situation at all, said to me, "Haven't you tried to spoil a good hunt?" I said, "Thank God, Huntley, now I know why your children are stupid!" But they are not stupid and they go very well to Hounds.

Of the farmers in the Mendip Hunt country, I pick out one as a super horseman—Cyril Crossman—who could ride any horse, good, bad, or indifferent, and had no care for his neck. I have seen him take falls which would put most people out. I have also seen him run away with, and go straight through Hounds, and love being cursed for it. He has a very good son coming on to take his place one day. Whenever I had very bad horses I gave them to Cyril, and he generally made money out of them.

Fred Penny, now about 60, still goes, and he once jumped the double gates at a railway crossing, and I believe Tom Blinman did, too. If these two old Mendip sportsmen had hunted in Leicestershire, they would have put a good many in their places.

I have already referred to the occasion when I asked Miss Timmis to hunt Hounds, and Geoffrey Leacroft to help her. She afterwards told me that, when they got into a covert with the Hounds, she would say, "I wonder what we ought to do now." Anyhow, she showed marvellous sport. Later on she married Tom Corpe. They were married at Priddy Church, and we all rode to church, and on the way back jumped every fence we could find. Tom Corpe was captain of the Somerset Rugby Team, and when he made enough money he decided to hunt, knowing nothing about the job at all. He was responsible for saying that he was not quite up to his horse's weight.

One day, hunting with the Harriers, I was riding a four-year old. I got Holley to give me a lead on an older horse, and he turned to me and said, "Put the pace on, Sir, the Hounds are swimming." To my amazement I saw Holley disappear in the water, and I followed him, and we jumped into a weir about 40 feet across, and had to swim out.

We were running a fox rather late in the evening through the valley below Webbington and on to Banwell. We got into some rather closely fenced country. As it was practically dark and we knew that there was a lot of wire about, Mervyn Hill said to me "Stop a minute, there is a car coming down that hill, and in a minute it will show its lights on a fence and then we can see whether there is wire or not." The next minute we marked our fox to ground quite close to the spot.

In the season 1912—13 we were drawing Lillypool Hanging, which I had to do on foot, and we found a fox in the last piece of gorse; and when they went away I had 400 yards to run to get my horse. I caught the Hounds at Cheddar Gorge, and then they ran on to Stoke, and my horse was beat to the world. I had a second horse out for my brother, and I had told the fellow on him to keep up with me,

so I changed on to it. I had about three couple of Hounds with me then, and as I changed they put up a hare. I said to the fellow "Stop them and bring them on." We ran our fox to within half a mile of Ebbor, but he turned short and we got him at Cheddar Head Farm. Just before that I caught Frank up and he said "My horse is beat to the world; where is my second horse?" I didn't tell him I was on it, and he never knew. Anyhow, when we killed, a seven mile point, he embraced all the Hounds, embraced all the girls, and tried to embrace me, and said "Now we will start a pack of Foxhounds!" And that was the start of the Mendip Hunt.

I got busy and wrote to every landowner on Mendip. In spite of considerable opposition on the part of people who said Mendip was not a foxhunting country, I eventually succeeded in shewing them that it was; and we decided to get a pack together, and in the Spring of 1914 we bought our Hounds. The late Duke of Beaufort was a great help to us and sold us ten couple of good Hounds; and we bought half the Gogerddan Pack (I was ignorant of Welsh Hounds then) from Sir E. Parry-Pryse, and some from Rugby. We engaged Frank Hayes as Huntsman, and Sam Isaacs as first whipper-in and Kinch as second. We also kept on the Harriers and enlarged the Kennels, and when, in August 1914, war broke out, we had forty couple of foxhounds and thirty-five couple of Harriers in Kennel and thirty-one Hunters.

When the Hounds had to go, the farmers offered to take a couple each and keep them for us. We tried it, but every day more and more Hounds kept returning to Kennel and so we had to give them away. The Stanton Drew had most of them, but they were badly looked after there. Some we sent to France and I heard they gave good sport until the authorities stopped hunting behind the lines.

We took most of our horses to the North Somerset Yeomanry at Bath, and saw to it that farmers in our Hunt, from whom we had bought horses, had their horses again as troopers. We gave away all the Hounds hoping for happier times one day.

The following incidents in my hunting life I think are worth recording.

One happened when I was trying to start the Hounds in 1913/14. A neighbour of mine was patron of a living adjoining one I was patron of, and the Bishop was trying to get the livings amalgamated. The said patron had a lot of good fox coverts, but was not very keen on my idea of Hounds. He was also, and is, a very good churchman, and he asked me if I would try to stop the amalgamation of our two livings. I said "Yes, if you preserve foxes for me." The War put an end to what he thought was an improper suggestion on my part.

I suppose it was at the beginning of my last season as Master of the Mendip. Somerset is rather famous for its Harvest Homes, and I and Morris were invited to one at Henton. We were the guests of honour, and every farmer there was a fox hunter. We ate and we drank, and after the festival was over we were asked if we would walk in front of the band around the village. We had to agree, as we knew that foxes lives depended on it, and so we set out. It was very funny, for there was I, about six feet seven, and Morris about five feet; and there we were, stepping out to a good tune. Morris said "I wish Mr. Frank would motor along now and see us." Anyhow, we did our job and had a grand day. Anything done for the good of fox hunting is worth while.

During my last season, 1935/36, a small holder near Francis Plantation who disliked hunting threw a stone at me and hit my horse. The next time I went there I and my second horseman each carried a couple of stones and threatened him with them, and

he fairly ran. I have never yet met an anti-hunting man who was not a coward. I have never met a hunting man who was a coward.

When Frank was going to start polo at Foxbury he had to put some walls up. He asked a local bricklayer what he would charge to do the work, but his charge was so much that Frank took some walls up at Priddy Hill Farm, had them hauled by lorry to Cheddar Station, then to Chislehurst by rail and to Foxbury by lorry, and had them built by a Somerset labourer rather than pay a bricklayer an exorbitant rate.

When we had our Harriers, a great friend of mine, Timothy Jones Mortimer, celebrated for having broken his neck twice, and also his hip, and walking short on one leg, wrote to me and said that a fellow he knew told him that he had hunted with our Harriers and jumped over 100 rhines. Timothy said "I know he is a liar, but can I come out with you and prove it?" He came and stayed with me, and I mounted him on two of my horses, and his tally at the end of the day was 201 rhines, three post and rails, and one gate. Incidentally, he and I jumped 27 feet of water over a hedge and a cattle drinking pool. Horses could and did jump in those days.

I have found it hard to decide how to end my book; but having read "Huic Holloa" I might copy that very excellent book. The author finished a season's hunting by going feet foremost on a stretcher into Brighton Hospital. My riding days ended on the 26th of May, 1936—the day before the Derby Mahmoud won—by my being swept off my favourite hack's back by a tree at Shiplett, kicked on the head, and then taken home in an ambulance and carried feet foremost into my bungalow, with concussion and three broken ribs. They wanted to take me to Weston Hospital, but Mrs. Corpe and Mrs. Butter, who were with me, said I should probably break the Hospital up when I came round; so they decided it was safer to take me home, and I was grateful. Having broken almost every bone in my body except my right arm and right leg,

having broken my left arm twice, and cracked or broken all my ribs, I do not think anyone ought to call me a funk for giving up at the age of sixty-one. I still keep horses for other people to hunt, and love doing it. As for myself, I am a back number.

As I write I have just heard of the death of Arthur Hardwick, one-time Master of the Weston Harriers, and as good a sportsman as ever lived. I feel sure that his spirit is now watching over us here and is helping us to carry on the good work of hunting. When a sportsman dies, he does not go to Heaven or Hell, he just lives his life over again in someone else's body, whether for better or worse depends on the life he has led, and I am sure he will live it in the best way possible. If the worst came to the worst, there might be many a worse way of living than becoming the animal you have hunted all your life and setting your wits against a pack of Hounds.

The following incident makes me believe that we descend into animals' bodies in the end. A one-time Master of Hounds in Sussex died. Hounds met a week later and had a 12-mile point and killed on his grave.

In my own Mendip country we did not hunt because a prominent farmer had died. When we met again, we found near the Church where he had been buried, and ran to ground on his farm six miles away, and I would not dig as I was certain it was him.

If ever, when I am gone, a great long-legged fox is found in the neighbourhood of Crooks Peak, I hope the Master or Huntsman will give him the benefit of the doubt, if he goes to ground.

H. A. T.



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